



A Healthier Baby by Breastfeeding

By Janet D. Lawson, M.D., F.A.C.O.G.

Dear Dr. Lawson:

I have heard stories from my friends that breastfeeding is painful. Why would anyone want to do it if it hurts?
--Deborah P., Dallas

Dear Deborah:

Most women never experience pain or soreness from breastfeeding, but some women do. *Slight* soreness from the stretching of the connective tissue around the nipple is normal in the first few days. *Intense* soreness is *not* normal. Intense soreness is usually caused by placing the baby incorrectly at the breast or by the baby latching on incorrectly.

These two problems can cause nipple soreness, even blisters, but can easily be corrected by removing the baby, positioning him correctly, and reattaching him to the breast. Make sure your baby's

- face, tummy and knees are facing you in a straight line.
- mouth opens wide like a yawn when you bring him to your breast.
- mouth contains as much of the dark area around the nipple as possible.

Mild soreness can be soothed by rubbing breastmilk onto the nipples at the end of a feed. Purified lanolin, found at baby shops and drugstores, can be

used for more intense soreness and doesn't have to be wiped off before the next feeding. Nipples should be air-dried. Never use soap or lotion on your nipples because they will cause dryness. Warm shower water is the only cleansing needed. Glands around the nipple, called Montgomery glands, produce a natural oil to protect them from dryness.

Call a lactation consultant, your physician or a WIC breastfeeding counselor in your area if:

- you have intense nipple soreness.
- discomfort continues after two weeks.
- you are unsure or uncomfortable about the way you are positioning your baby at your breast.
- you feel your baby is not latched on correctly.
- you are worried about your baby getting enough breastmilk.

My hope is that every new mom will try breastfeeding and see for herself what a great way it is to bond with her child. Talk to moms who have had good experiences nursing. They are the ones who will support and encourage you.

If you are pregnant or planning to start a family, you owe it to your children to learn everything you can about the benefits of breastfeeding. Call the State WIC office at 1-800-942-3678 for breastfeeding information. If you are a new mom and need immediate help or assistance with breastfeeding, call the Texas breastfeeding helpline at 1-800-514-6667.

Dr. Lawson is the Medical Consultant for Title X, Texas Department of State Health Services.